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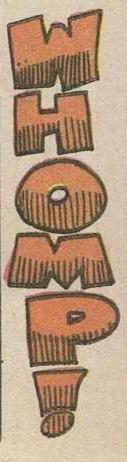


















































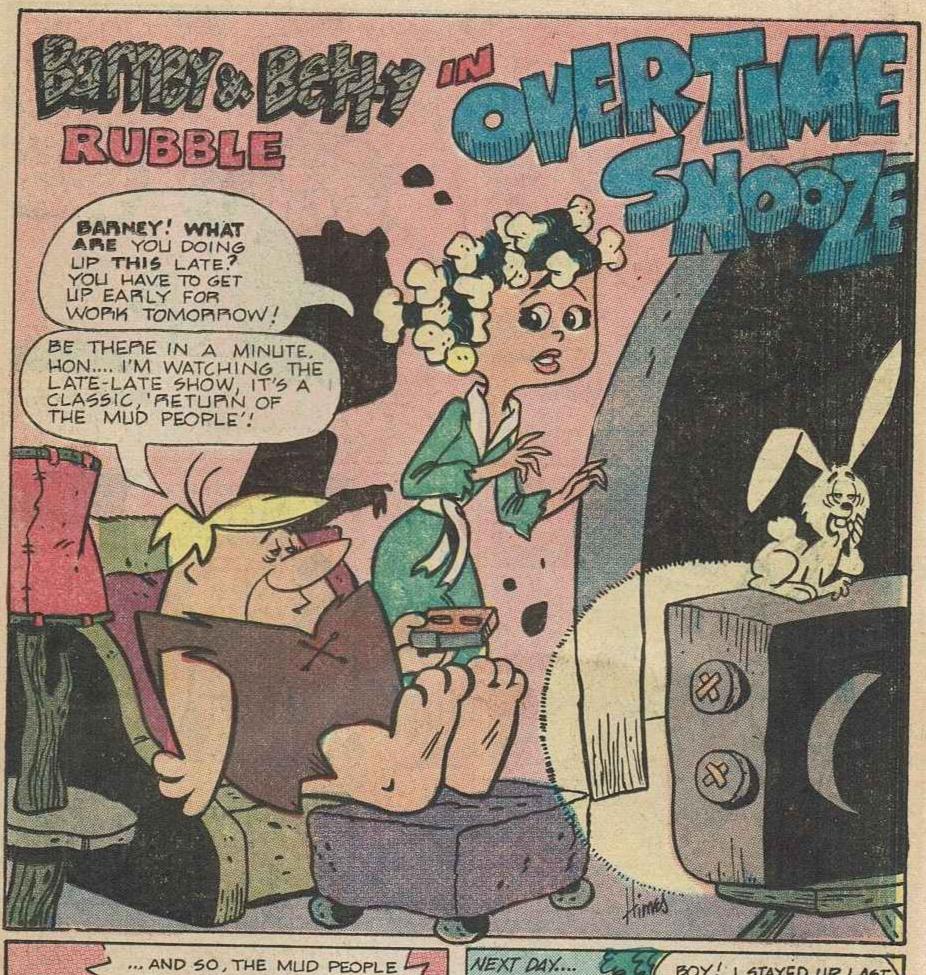




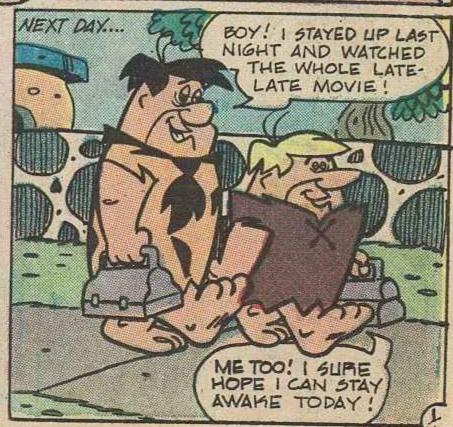








































Commenda











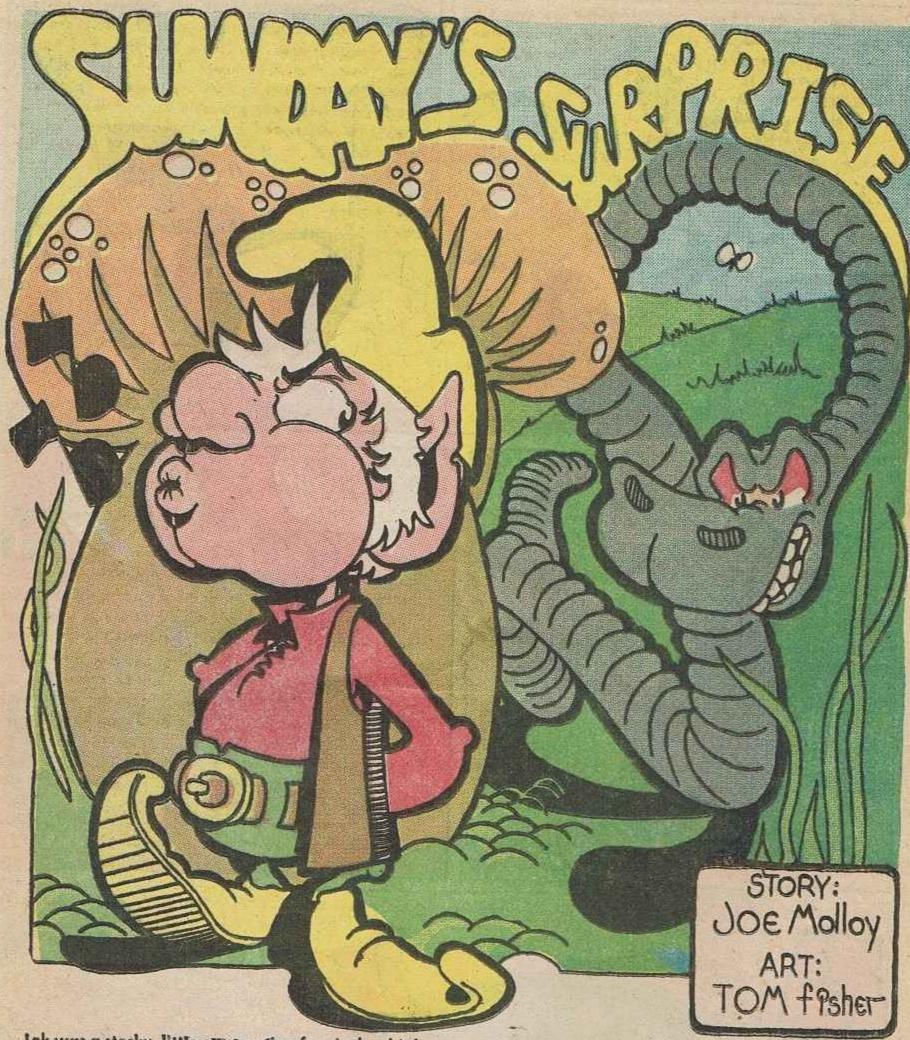












Lok was a stocky, little est standing four inches high on tiptoes. But today he was extended to his full stature, enjoying a gentle gust of wind coming through the hedge from the north. As the gust passed over a human - owned sprinkler, it caught a few droplets of moisture and carried them to Lok. The feel of this spray against his face was worth the effort of rising early on this summer, Sunday morning.

Lek deffed his elfin cap and thought, "The sky god is certainly charitable today. The past, three Sundays have seen nothing but rain," as the wind tossed his silver locks. "There is not a cloud in the sky." But Lok did not notice the dark mass on the herizon following the wind's journey out of the north.

Lok laid down upon grass still moist with morning's

dew, and rested his head against a cushien - soft puffball. "Perhaps I can catch a little sleep in the sun," pondered Lok, hoping to add some color to his pale features. But this was not to be. A slight increase in the wind's velocity gave Lok his first cause for concern. The second came when a shadow crossed the line between Lok and the sun.

"Huh," mumbled Lok as he rose to a sitting position.
"What's that cloud doing up there?"

His only response came in the form of an ley droplet that settled on Lok's nose, and hung there a second before rolling off ante his leather jerkin.

Lok rousted tired muscles and began to run for his shelter. But it was as if the storm could see him. A tremendous deluge hit him in mid-stride. The impact

knocked him to his knees and pulled his cap over his eyes. Only his ness prevented the headgear from enclosing his entire face. Lok tugged at the cap and finally managed to pull it off his head, while muttering a few choice words about the traitorous sky god. The storm was new raging in full force.

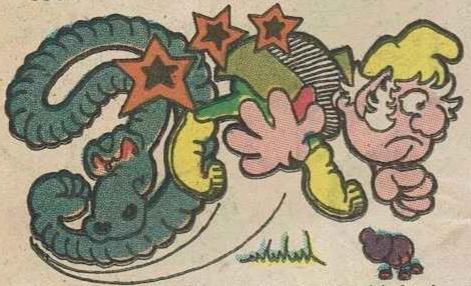
When Lok returned to his feet, he was dismayed to see Goober the Worm blocking his path. He had quite evidently fled his flooded burrow to bask in the freedom of the open storm, but now he presented a serious problem to the surprised elf. When he was younger, lok had played a good many tricks on the slow - moving worm. And a worm never forgets. Under ordinary circumstances Lok would have no problem outdistancing the clumsy worm, but he was rather doubtful about his footing in the mud. This was the worm's element, and Lok was at his mercy.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't my old friend Lok," drawled the legless, old creature. "I owe you a few

favors I'd like to repay."

"Oh, don't bother," responded Lok, preparing to be battered by the vengeful werm.

BOOM - the worm collided heavily with Lok. But



the bump seemed to clear the elf's mind. "Look behind you, Goober," he warned. "It's the fisherman."

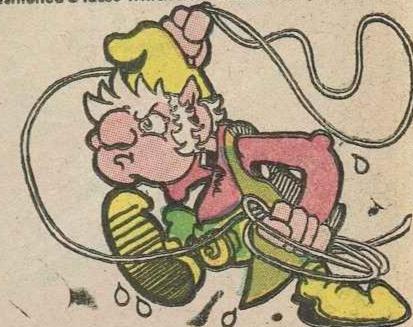
The two scurried in apposite directions, and it was some time before the worm realized he had been tricked. "Grumble, grumble, grumble," he grumbled.

"How do I always get caught in storms like this?" wondered Lek, now safe from the worm, but still under nasty skies. And he was not the only one in danger.



struggling against the storm. He gasped as he saw some of them stumble into a mud pit, newly created by the raging rain. He knew that the mud would smear their wings and clutch at their legs, making it impossible for them to free themselves. A concern, sprung from two wells, greed and love, flowed into his breast. He depended upon these creatures for his livelihood, but he loved them as well. It was, accordingly, no surprise that he would risk his own safety for them.

He unfurled his rope of stolen spider - webbing and fashioned a lasso which he wielded with practiced ac-



curacy. Although he was soaked to the skin and his wet clothing weighed upon him, he nevertheless managed to pull all his aphids to safety until only one remained. But this last was too far for his toss. As a result, his lasso kept missing the mark, and the insect kept sinking lower and lower into the coss.

There was only one hope. Lok climbed to an everhanging branch. The distance was now shorter, and his cost proved accurate. Within minutes, he had the final aphid safely on a patch of solid ground. It was then that he noticed the rain had stopped and the sky was beginning to clear.

Then a ray of sunlight fought through the dissipating clouds and touched his face. He squinted at first, and then smiled, hoping he could still salvage some leisure from this hectic Sunday. Lok collapsed on the soaked moss and muttered, "Never trust a sky

